



Dramatists and thespians are paid tribute on World Theatre Day

The International Theatre Institute (ITI), an international non-governmental organization (NGO), which was founded in Prague in 1948 by UNESCO, designated March 27 as “World Theatre Day” in 1961. A worldwide network, ITI aims “to promote international exchange of knowledge and practice in theatre arts (drama, dance, music theatre) in order to consolidate peace and solidarity between peoples, to deepen mutual understanding and increase creative co-operation between all people in the theatre arts.”

Mascaruba, the island’s National Drama Society is a part of the ITI, and Aruba, along with the world, celebrated this day dedicated to Art of the theatre.

In the courtyard and chapel of the Instituto di Cultura lovers of the art of the stage were treated to a program of drama and dance that ranged from the spiritual to the avant-garde. The evening’s program opened with the original and innovative production by the students of the Drama department of Aruba’s I.P.A. school, the teacher-training institute. “A Homage to Theater” was produced and written by Aruba’s master dramatist J. Freddy Montoya, and was a fine example of contemporary experimental theater.

In addition, the program on Monday evening included dance and vignettes by noted Aruban dramatists such as Jarmin Acosta doing “The Case of Bernarda Alba” translated to Papiamentu from the work by Federico Garcia Lorca, and “Pan Bati” by Harry Zimmerman, a Tumba (dance) dramatization realized by Xiovanne (Poppy) Caciano.

One of the most important elements of March 27th is the circulation of the World Theatre Day International Message, traditionally written by a theatre personality of world stature. Jean Cocteau of France wrote the first message in 1962. This year, Victor Hugo Rascón Banda of Mexico was given this task and honor. Senor Rascón Banda has been quoted as saying that “With the name my mother gave me, she condemned to be a writer, and with the childhood I had, I could only be a playwright.” His body of work, consisting of over 50 plays, spans a “significant spectrum depicting the complexity of the human being and his relationship with the social environment,” according to his biographer, Rocío Galicia of the National Center for Theater Research “Rodolfo Usigli.”

The commencement of Aruba’s celebration of the World Theater Day was momentous for the island as after a welcome from the Director of the Instituto di Cultura, Frank Croes and the Minister of Labor, Sport and Culture, Ramon Lee, the gathering was addressed by Aruba’s Secretary General to UNESCO, Jimmy Oduber. In the presence of many of the islands distinguished patrons of the Arts, and Aruba’s guests for the day, the Consul of Colombia, Sr. Ricardo Sin Fuentes and his wife, Mr. Oduber made a stirring announcement. He informed the audience that as of Monday, Hubert Cornelis (Juby) Naar, one of Aruba’s premier thespians, art, and drama critics had been nominated to UNESCO to be named “A Living Human Treasure,” the first Aruban to be so honored.

In 1950, the Government of Japan began to designate certain individuals or groups who embodied intangible national cultural values as living human treasures, just as places or things of great cultural value are designated as national treasures, thus becoming eligible for special protection and support. Several countries have followed suite with their own official programs of recognition for intangible cultural values and the people who embody them, and UNESCO has set forth guidelines for the nomination and confirmation of such groups and individuals. It is not only an honor for the individual, but the country as well to be home to a “Living Human Treasure.” The evening of theater ended with an official honoring of Juby Naar by Sr. Carla Zaandam of the National Commission of UNESCO and Bill Tromp, President of Mascaruba.

Jimmy Oduber, in his statement declared, “Theater is life, and life is theater.” This day of celebration exemplified and displayed how the interpretation of existence and its presentation on the stage by creative actors and playwrights, whether in comedy or drama, illuminates our foibles and virtues, providing insights and enriching our lives. Theater not only provides entertainment, it teaches, often in subtle ways, life lessons that are applied in as many ways as there are individuals in the audience to absorb and interpret them based on their own life experience. This is the fluidity and joy of theater, the many nuances and elucidation it brings to each of us, not only as the company presents it, but what each of us takes from it. Congratulations to all performers of the theatrical arts on their special day!